# Writing, Scriptures and Digital Culture

## 1    Preamble

This book aims to demonstrate how digital writing contributes to the emergence of "a new relationship between the human body and the machines" as Jacques Derrida proposed when he considered the effects of new technologies[1]. This new relationship will surely influence the digital future of the Jewish-Christian textual corpus known as the Bible, also referred to as "the Scriptures".

The French title brings together this duality in one expression: *Ecritures digitales.* The English subtitle makes explicit the double meaning of the unique French word *Ecritures*: *Digital writing, digital Scriptures*. Given the predominance of English as a scientific language, it must now be counted as a full partner to francophone humanities research: consequently, each chapter will be summarized in English. For the complete argumentation with evidence, the French version will need to be consulted.

This general introduction is followed by two chapters on digital Scriptures (Chapters 1 and 4), and two chapters covering digital writing (Chapters 2 and 3). Chapters 1 and 2 focus on a general topical analysis and key issues, whereas Chapters 3 and 4 develop the general hypothesis presented above. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the main points of this journey through the digital humanities landscape.

## 2    Scriptures, Writing, Bodies and Words

According to Jean-Claude Carrière in *N'espérez pas vous débarasser des livres*, the Modern history of books begins with the history of The Book - the Bible: "With the religions of the Book, the book has served not just as a container, as a receptacle, but also as a 'wide angle' from which it has been possible for everything to be observed, everything related, maybe even for everything to be

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1    Derrida, *Sur parole*, Kindle, l. 484 : "Ce qui se prépare, à un rythme encore incalculable, de façon à la fois très lente et très rapide, c'est un nouvel homme bien sûr, un nouveau corps de l'homme, un nouveau rapport du corps de l'homme aux machines, et on l'aperçoit déjà cette sorte de transformation".

decided"[2]. The historical weight of the Bible as world symbol of books still persists today; as an example, consider the welcoming entry gate to the International Reformation Exposition in Wittenberg in May 2017, a "riesiges Buch": a 27 meter high Bible[3].

Considering this historical weight and the available evidence, the Bible should be considered at a deeply symbolic level in terms of the definitions of books and with respect to the digital turn – especially since the place of Jewish-Christian traditions is constantly changing in Western culture. Erich Auerbach, while writing *Mimesis* in Istanbul during the Second World War, was still able to clearly link Homer to fiction and the Bible to history, using the "anchor of the Christian teleology" according to Edward Said[4]. Thus, digital humanities (DH) culture can be said to have already been in incubation during the Second World War[5]. The decades between 1945 and 2000 represent a transition period, as demonstrated in an overview paper on DH in 2012[6]. Within this general era of evolution, biblical scholars, like Jeffrey Siker, were often influenced by Auerbach's Christian teleological anchor model. Siker is the first author of a monograph on the digital Bible, and he proposes that: "The Bible […is] not just a unified book, but the Book of all books. It is no wonder that the Bible continues to be the best-selling book of all time, year after year, version after version, translation after translation"[7].

If Carrière started a discussion about Scriptures as symbolic of books and the digital turn in *N'espérez pas vous débrarasser des livres*, Umberto Eco notably focused on the body in his work; he argues that only handwriting is biological[8]. However, this might sound outdated now that we have multiple examples of continuity between bodies and electronic writing, including a full biological inquiry into the influence of the smartphone on some parts of our brain[9].

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2   Carrière – Eco, *N'espérez pas*, Kindle edition, l. 1290-1298.

3   *Reformation 2017,* <https://r2017.org/weltausstellung/welcome>.

4   Said, *Mimesis*, p. IX: "Auerbach prétend que le vrai concept de *figura* fonctionne aussi comme un moyen terme entre la dimension littéraire-historique et, pour l'auteur chrétien, le monde de la vérité, *veritas*"; see Clivaz, *L'ange et la sueur de sang*, p. 10-11.

5   See Clivaz, "Common Era 2.0", p. 18-21.

6   Clivaz, "L'ère d'après ou Common Era 2.0", p. 3: "après deux générations complexes de transition, des années 1940 à l'an 2000, une nouvelle ère culturelle s'annonce, inaugurée par la décade 2001-2011, et que je propose de nommer *Common Era 2.0*, 'l'ère d'après', puisqu'elle s'enchaîne à cette ère dite 'chrétienne'".

7   Siker, *Liquid Scriptures*, p. 9; see Chapter 4, point 1.4 for a discussion of this monograph, as well as Clivaz, "Review of Jeffrey S. Siker", <https://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/11851_13221.pdf>.

8   Carrière – Eco, *N'espérez pas*, Kindle edition, l. 197-203.

9   Gindrat et al., "Use-Dependent Cortical Processing", DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.cub.2014.11.026>.